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SPEECH

BY

MR. N. F. DAVIN, M.P.

ON

THE BUDGET.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,
OTTAWA, MARCH, 29TH, 1892.

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Mr. Davies having followed Sir John Thompson, Mr. Davin, who was received with Ministerial cheers, said:—

I have hoped that we had arrived at a period when my hon. friends on the Opposition side would be convinced that there was no use in pursuing the policy they have so long pursued; but after hearing the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) and the hon. member for Queen's P.E.I. (Mr. Davies) it would seem that they are still determined to fight under the old flag of unrestricted reciprocity, although that flag has been scouted from one end of the country to the other.

An hon. member. No.

Mr. Davin. My hon. friend says "no." My hon. friend may sit there in coming sessions, and that colony about which my hon. friend from Bothwell was so humorous may have grown still larger; the number of sheep of which he spoke may have swelled by fifty or one hundred per cent., and those goats that have gone to the barrenness prepared for them by the policy of the hon. gentlemen, may be still larger, and that cry of unrestricted reciprocity may yet be heard. That cry, even when there was behind it a certain amount

of belief, a certain evidence of faith, was not either a very successful, nor, in my opinion, a very respectable one. And now when it is absolutely a falsetto cry, when we hear it from those benches—because hon. gentlemen must say something and have been able to invent nothing else—that cry has passed into the category of ridiculous clap-trap, and I was sorry to see so much time occupied here to-night in re-echoing the doleful sounds we have so often heard from my hon. friends. The hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat (Mr. Davies, P.E.I.) was preceded by the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), and I sympathize with some of the remarks made by the hon. members for Bothwell. Neither this assembly nor any other human institution can be expected to reach or even approach the ideal. When speaking of public opinion in Canada as not satisfactory, he might say the same of England, he might say the same of any country where constitutional government prevails; you might say public opinion is not all it ought to be, but if you compare public opinion in England to-day with what it was fifty years ago, not to go back to the time of Charles II, not to go back to the Revolu-

tion, you will find that the state of public opinion in England is intelligent, it is ever ready to grasp all great questions, and is in advance of what it was at any other time. A man familiar with the history of Canada must know that although public opinion, and the organs of public opinion, and this great instrument of public opinion that we have here, may not be all that they should be yet, yet the organs of public opinion are abler, public opinion itself is more enlightened, and this great representative of public opinion is, by the confession and evidence of all persons competent to give an opinion, in advance of what it was 20 or 30 years ago, and I might make the same remark as to a still later period. But the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) has complained about public opinion, and of this Parliament taking a course he believed was inimical to a healthy public opinion, and why? Because of the very political sins that hon. gentleman have been accustomed to fall into. I grant that, according to publicists and thinkers, the English Parliament and this Parliament does not approach the ideal of what the great council of the nation should be. Is all the responsibility with one side or the other? Suppose a member of the Conservative party—the hon. member points with a ghostly finger towards some one on this side—may happen to take that course which ought to be taken by every member of this House at times. Remember he is one of the council of the nation; remember that we are here to take counsel, that it is not our business to come here and range ourselves merely in hostile camps and have political jousts. That is not the ideal of a Parliament. The ideal of Parliament is that men should come together and give counsel. What will happen? We have seen it happen here at different times. If a member of the Conservative party should rise and differ in the least from his own party, differ in some small detail, as men of both parties ought to do from their parties, what will be done by hon. gentlemen opposite? Will they approach the question subsequently in the same large spirit? No. They will try and twist

that act to a party advantage, and seek from a particular and small occurrence to draw a general conclusion and make a sweeping effect. I wish to deal very briefly with the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat. He commenced his speech by resorting with great cleverness to a style of advocacy that those who have practised in criminal courts are familiar with. I do not think he was very ingenuous. He tried to prove that the reverse of a statement that was made from this side was the true state of the case. But what are the facts in regard to discrimination by Newfoundland? When we got that treaty the Newfoundland tariff was 30 cents per barrel on flour, and the treaty allows 25 cents for United States flour. The protest of the Government was based on that fact, and the Act which the hon. gentleman confounded with this only came into existence twelve months afterwards. (Hear, hear, from Sir John Thompson). I say for an hon. gentleman sitting within two chairs of a philosophic statesman who takes such large views of things in general as does the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), it was hardly a creditable proceeding on the part of the hon. member for Queen's (Mr. Daveis). But hon. gentlemen around him cheered, and however grossly at variance with the facts the statement might be, hon. gentlemen opposite would cheer. I will be very brief in dealing with the hon. gentleman's argument as to what the Minister of Finance did in giving us the information that was in his bosom as one of the Ministers who went to Washington. There can be no doubt whatever that it is a well established rule that when diplomatic negotiations take place and protocols come into existence, if a Minister intends to refer to these, and the transactions are completed, they should be laid on the table of Parliament. But if you take the most extreme cases, and if you examine the authorities you will find this: that this position is never surrendered by a Government under constitutional procedure, that it rests with their sense of responsibility to the country as to whether or not they will at any given

time lay the papers on the table. Of course, they are responsible. But in the present case you had really no diplomatists in Washington to arrange a treaty. What you had was this: Three Ministers going down to Washington at the invitation—and I will come to the dispute on that in a minute, and pass rapidly from it too—of a member of a foreign government to have an informal, a *quasi* private discussion as to what might be done in the way of reciprocal trade. As I understand it, because I am not in the confidence of the Government in this matter, in regard to the subjects that were definitely arranged, and in regard to which definite information could be given, we have the papers laid on the table; and in regard to these communications which passed between the Ministers and Mr. Blaine and General Foster, respecting reciprocal trade, what have we? We have what has again and again been done in the British Parliament, we have one of those Ministers, the very best means of affording information to Parliament that could be obtained, rising in his place and stating what had taken place between him and Mr. Blaine. (Cheers.) The matter is somewhat different from a Minister giving information to Parliament about what took place between a diplomatist and the representative of a foreign state, that diplomatist not being in Parliament. What we had was one of the Ministers who engaged in these conversations with Mr. Blaine giving the House a statement of what took place, and I ask hon. members what better means could Parliament have of being made acquainted with what took place? The question of what a Minister is bound to do in regard to information in his possession came up in 1863 in the British Parliament. It was about very important transactions; it was a case where, if ever, the papers ought to have been laid on the table, once you grant the argument of the hon. member for Bothwell. But, Sir, when Lord John Manners, and Mr. Pope Hennessey protested against the Government referring to the communications that they had had without laying these communications on the

table, what does Lord Palmerston say:

"It is altogether a new doctrine to me that a Minister making a statement from information which has come to his knowledge, is bound to lay on the table of the House the documents from which that information is derived. I admit no such principle. It is perfectly true that when a Minister reads a paper he is bound to lay it on the table."

If the hon. Minister of Finance had come here and made extracts from so-called protocols, there would be ground for complaining that they were not laid on the table. But there could have been no protocols, and the hon. member for Queen's (Mr. Davies) used the word, as he used many other words, in a way that would make the genius of English literature stare and gasp. If the hon. Minister of Finance read from some documents, there would be good ground for complaining that they were not laid on the table; but the reason why it is necessary to lay documents on the table when extracts are read from them, is that Parliament should be face to face with the source of the information that is given to it. In this case, we have the very men here, between whom and Mr. Blaine the conversation had taken place, and you cannot doubt the accuracy of the statement made by the hon. Minister of Finance unless you resort to the extraordinary parliamentary politeness that belongs at times to the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) and which I am afraid the hon. and learned member for Queen's (Mr. Davies) fell into to night, and unless you are going to say to a Minister of the Crown who stands in his place with the eyes of the country and the eyes of Parliament upon him, and whose position could not be maintained if he would palter with the truth; we do not believe you unless you are going to doubt the word of the Minister of Finance, and put his position and responsibility aside, in the face of the fact that if he misrepresented what took place, detection and exposure must inevitably and speedily follow. I say that that sort of thing is not treated properly by speaking satirically of it as politeness, but that it should be denounced with all the invective a man is capable of, because it is a degrading thing to this House to hear

such remarks as we heard to-night from the member for Queen's (Mr. Davies.) I shall not refer to the point made by the member for Queen's in reference to what the Minister of Justice said at Perth, and for this reason : There is no use whatever in trying to put down the slanders or the misrepresentations of certain people. You know, Sir, that Mr. Pope, in one of his admirable poems, speaking of slanders alludes to a certain insect that has an uncontrollable instinct, but an instinct necessary for its own existence, to spin cobwebs. These cobwebs are very unsightly, and so the poet says of the slanderer :

"Break one cobweb through
He spins the slight self-pleasing thread anew.
Destroy his fib or sophistry—in vain,
The creature's at his dirty work again."

(Cheers). I confess to you, Sir, that I was not surprised that my hon. friend spoke once more about the monstrosity of the Minister of Finance talking about the prosperity of the country. It is a dreadful thing that the Minister of Finance, in the face of what we see to-day in Canada, should stand up here and speak of the prosperity of the country. It is a monstrous thing that he should dwell on the increase in the tonnage of our ships, of the mileage of our railways ; perfectly monstrous that he should say one word about the vast increase of our exports or that he should refer to the evidences of our prosperity. It was superfluous, it was monstrous, and if the hon. gentleman will excuse me for saying so, it was a superfluity of naughtiness, if I may borrow a word from Paul, because the country had proclaimed the conviction of its prosperity so strong by reducing hon. gentlemen opposite to the miserable account of empty benches that they now make up, that it was perfectly unnecessary for the Minister of Finance to dwell upon the prosperity of the country. We know that when my hon. friends opposite went from place to place, and sent forth their wailings and draped themselves, so to speak, as political mutes, and went to the funeral of something, you may guess what it was, but it was not our funeral, anyway—(laughter) the country rejected them

We know that the people whose votes they needed, and whose votes they wanted, and whose votes they courted with tears and wailings, declared in answer to their entreaties : "Gentlemen, really in these constituencies the accommodation in the lunatic asylums is greatly limited, and begone as quickly as you can." I am much concerned for my hon. friend from Bothwell (Mr. Mills).

I have been a dabbler in constitutional law and things of that sort myself, but I have never gone, of course, as deeply as that hon. gentleman (Mr. Mills). In fact, I would be sorry to go so deep as he. One of the Lake poets tells a brother poet that if he does not get up from his books he will grow double ; and to be too studious is attended with some inconvenience, and to be too learned is not always a happy thing. I confess that I feel for my friend from Bothwell (Mr. Mills) when I see him with something sitting heavily on his mind, rising discontentedly from that seat to which in its infinite mercy an all-wise Providence has allotted him, and feeling fundamentally uneasy. (Laughter.) I always sympathise with him in such a position. He has had too much learning, he is uneasy in his mind until he gets off his constitutional expression of profound principles, and I come and I sit here like a Paul at the feet of Gamaliel, to learn from his superior wisdom, and I watch and watch, but he takes such a long time to get around the corners before he gets to the subject—

Mr. Mills (Bothwell). That you are fundamentally affected.

Mr. Davin. No, not so profoundly as that. I cannot pay my hon. friend that compliment ; but I find it hard to get at his point. At last, as I sat here to-day and tried to make out what my hon. friend was at, though I had a pen in hand and was taking notes, I could not discover what it was. Then I asked myself what he was like, and I thought he was like an aged hen in a state of metaphysical dubitation as to whether she would lay an egg or not. (Laughter and cheers.)

Mr. Mills (Bothwell). And you sympathised with the hen.

Mr. Davin. Now, Mr. Speaker, there

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can be no question, in my opinion, as to the prosperity of the country. I will not take time at this late hour to go into comparisons; but I have been visiting some of the constituencies. I was in South Perth, which used to be represented by Mr. Trow, whom personally—and I told him so—I am sorry not to see here, though on other grounds I did not wish him to be elected—

Mr. Mills (Bothwell). Explain that metaphysical distinction.

Mr. Davin. I went into the Township of Blanchard, and afterwards when I met Mr. Trow, I think at St. Mary's, I asked the people: How on earth can these men say that this country is not prosperous, when in this very township there is not a farmhouse which has not the rank of a villa or a mansion, on which \$500 or \$600 or possibly \$1,000 has been spent in ornamentation? Yet these poor farmers, who are ground to earth, bled livid or pallid—I believe bled white is the language of the member for South Oxford—in that very township gave, I think, 52 more votes for the Conservative candidate than they had done in the previous election.

Mr. Landerkin. How many times did you speak there?

Mr. Davin. Three times. Now, it is the same everywhere; and I say to hon. gentlemen opposite that if they want to see their party grow smaller and smaller they will continue the course which they have pursued for some years past; but if they want to make an Opposition which will be powerful and effective, they will change their tactics. Now, the prosperity of this country is a fact, notwithstanding the hon. member for South Oxford. I am sorry for that hon. member, although mercy is for the merciful. I doubt very much if there is much mercy in the hon. gentleman's composition. I doubt very much if he would have very much pity for political opponents if their ranks were reduced as the ranks of his friends are; and he is one of the causes of that reduction. He is the embodiment of this cry against the prosperity of the country, and the embodiment of the disloyalty in the cry of unrestricted reciprocity which was so apparent in the

last part of the speech of the hon. member for Queen's (Mr. Davies). Why, the hon. gentleman is so discounted by that policy to-day if his party could they would get rid of him; but they cannot do it. The country does not want him. The most they could do in the recent bye-elections was to keep him off the platform. What is the career of that hon. gentleman? He has gone about the country barking at its prosperity, barking at the Conservative party and the National Policy. He had a kind of political rabies which made him, so to speak, bite the Conservative party. Indeed, the event reminds me of Goldsmith's ballad or the mad dog. The mad dog bit a man, and the neighbors were all very anxious about the man, fearing that he would take hydrophobia and die. All the anxiety was directed to the man and none to the dog, but the event showed how much it was misdirected, because Goldsmith tells us that the man recovered from the bite—it was the dog that died. (Laughter and cheers.) Now, I am obliged to the hon. member for Queen's, for admitting that we had a good harvest in the North-West. That shows that the hon. gentlemen opposite are making progress. But he asks what credit have the Government for it?

Mr. Landerkin. They ploughed it all.

Mr. Davin. I grant you that the Government did not plough and the Government did not sow; but if the Conservative Government and the Government of Sir John Macdonald, of which this Government is the continuation, had not built the Canadian Pacific Railway, as the hon. member for South Oxford would not have them, as the hon. member for Bothwell and their late leader, Mr. Blake, would not have them, where would be that magnificent harvest of which the hon. gentleman now admits the existence? If he admits the existence of that harvest, what does it mean? Do the millions which come in from that harvest confine themselves to the North-West? Is it not the nature of money to spread itself as a river or lake, and touch all shores of the community? And yet the hon. gentleman asks what credit have the Government for it? I will tell him who has the credit.

Mr. Landarkin. It is Mr. Dewdney who has the credit; he is the Government of the North West.

Mr. Davin. The hon. gentleman is mistaken about that. I like my hon. friend so much that I am always sorry when I cannot agree with him, and the consequence is that whenever he makes a remark I am doomed to regret. (Laughter.) Now, Sir, I will not waste time in dealing with the decrease in the savings banks deposits. That has been dealt with fully in the speech of the hon. Minister of Finance, so that the answer to the hon. member for Queen's on that subject is in *Hansard*. With regard to shipping, I want to point out that the hon. gentleman must have been consciously disingenuous in what he said in regard to the decrease of the tonnage of vessels built in Canada. He tried to make out that that, too, was an evidence of diminished prosperity; yet the hon. gentleman must have known that within recent years the fashion has gone from timber ships to iron ships built on the Clyde; he must have known that large ships are registered in England—why? In order that they may escape municipal taxation. (Hear, hear.) And yet the hon. gentleman, knowing that, spoke as if he were speaking not in a Parliament like this, but before a jury, in which case when the trial is over and he has or has not got his verdict, there is no more about it. If in Parliament when he can be answered he talks that way, what would he say on the hustings? Again he spoke about the census. Well, I am not going to take up the time of the House about that, but I see the eyes of my hon. friend from Wellington (Mr. McMullen) fixed on me, and a smile that is childlike and bland lighting up his countenance. I will ask his attention therefore for a moment to a few remarks I will make about the census and the exodus, and as he is great on comparisons of figures I will call his attention to this comparison. May I point out to the hon. gentleman that he is actually not reasoning when he takes a set of figures for one year, say 1877, and compares it with a set for 1887. The true comparison would be

the figures which we could show, had hon. gentlemen opposite continued in office since 1878, as compared with those we can show to-day. That would be the real comparison, showing the state of the country, had the Mackenzie Administration continued in office until to-day as compared with what it actually is under the Conservative regime. Had hon. gentlemen opposite remained in power what would have happened? We should have had a Pacific Railway extending probably 200 miles west of Winnipeg. East of Winnipeg we should have had the water stretches; we should have no North-West whatever, and the credit of Canada would not be what it is to-day. Now, take the census. Does anybody suppose we have anything to do with limiting or increasing the population? Does anyone suppose that the exodus would not take place whatever government was in power?

Mr. Mills (Bothwell). Yes.

Mr. Davin. The hon. gentleman must suppose a great deal, because he knows very well that the natural cause of that exodus is the restless enterprising spirit of a progressive community such as ours. To say that the cause is to be attributed in any way to the quality of the Government shows a very bad state of perceptive powers, unless we had a state of things such as existed prior to 1878, when everybody was shrouded in gloom and no attempt made to develop our manufactures. But I say this, that with the country in a normal condition we have to account for the exodus by the enterprising spirit of restless educated young men who go across the line. Neither will I deal with what the hon. gentleman said about sugar, because after all that has been sufficiently dealt with. I want to refer once again to the negotiations at Washington and to what the hon. member for Queen's (P.E.I.) said concerning them. He described the Ministers, especially the Minister of Finance, as going down to Washington dishonestly, with the view of putting obstacles in the way of reciprocity, and he went on to say that the Minister was greatly to be blamed because he showed difficulties on the Canadian side in the way of a certain treaty

ould show, had hon. continued in office with those we can build be the real the state of the enzie Administra- until to-day as actually is under Had hon. gen- and in power what We should have tending probably nipeg. East of ve had the water ve no North-West of Canada would . Now, take the suppose we have iting or increasing anyone suppose not take place in power?

Yes. gentleman must because he knows cal cause of that erprising spirit of such as ours. To p be attributed in the Government e of perceptive a state of things 878, when every- a gloom and no p cur manufac- that with the dition we have to by the enterpris- cated young men

Neither will I gentleman said er all that has ith I want to negotiations at the hon. member said concerning the Ministers, of Finance, as gton dishonestly, obstacles in the e went on to say atly to be blamed ties on the Cana- a certain treaty

under discussion. But the hon. gentleman evidently fails to see that showing there was a difficulty on the Canadian side would be no evidence of a disinclination on the part of the Finance Minister to have a treaty. If he had shown difficulties on the American side, that would show he had disinclined to make a treaty. (Hear, here.) Can anyone who knows anything of our Conservative and Reform politicians doubt that every enlightened man in this country would be ready to make a treaty with the United States which would be useful to Canada? Nobody doubts for one moment that we would be ready to enter into a treaty on the line of that of 1854 modified by present conditions, and nobody doubts that such a treaty could be made if the Americans were willing to meet us half way or even a quarter. But, as the Finance Minister says, the history of our negotiations shows that to our proposals there are no counter proposals, and that when the hand was stretched out by Canada, no hand was stretched out to meet us. In fact, the conversations between the Finance Minister and Mr. Blaine reveal what might have been known from inference and from the political situation in the States, the character of the party to which Mr. Blaine belongs, and Mr. Blaine's own character, and that is that it would be impossible to get a commercial treaty with the United States unless on terms this country would never submit to. I was sorry to hear the closing remarks of the hon. member for Queen's. He talked in a vein of humiliation we have too often heard from that side of the House, but which the country has declared they will have none of. He said nothing could more tend to disloyalty than to have it go forth that it is difficult or impossible to make a treaty with the United States. What would that mean? It would mean that 5,000,000 of Canadians doubt their power to lay the foundation here of a great nation and are looking humbly, pitifully, to the United States? Can you imagine anything more contemptible? If that is the position of Canada the sooner we go cap in hand to Washington the better and

say, as it is impossible for us to do anything without your permission, as you are master of the situation, let us make the best arrangement we can for annexation. That is what the language of the hon. member means, if it means anything. But, Mr. Speaker, the people of this country by their votes in the past elections, have expressed their opinion. When I heard him talk about St. John and about the effect of our commercial legislation on New Brunswick, I could not help thinking that there is but one man from New Brunswick in this House. Are the people of New Brunswick all crazy that they will support a Government which is destroying their vitality and bleeding them white? Are the people of Canada, belonging to the most enlightened races, with education diffused so thoroughly amongst them, so utterly lost to their own interests that they will vote for the men who will destroy their own prosperity? The thing carries absurdity on its face, and the only thing needed to refute and denounce it, as I do this night, is that it is a pity to have the time of this House taken up, as it is and has been, by pounding at a cry that is entirely played out and waving a banner that the people will have nothing to do with. There is a member on this side of the House whom I greatly honor. He is a man of chivalrous soul—I mean the leader on that side—and, if he is going to stick to this cry, he will be like Cadot the hero of the fine poem written by Mr. Louis Frechette, "*Le drapeau fantome*." Cadot was with France when Canada was ceded to England. He still waved his white flag over his little fort. A number of English soldiers summoned him to surrender, and he refused. They were called away. Twenty years passed by and still the flag floats idly on its swaying mast, although it has no longer a meaning, and the unhappy man's chivalry is all wasted and astray. I say there is not a man on that side fighting for unrestricted reciprocity who is not fighting under a phantom banner which every sensible man can see has no longer any meaning. The Opposition commenced by taking a depraved line. First they took unre-

stricted reciprocity. Now they are driven down to commercial union, and afterwards we shall find them driven to annexation, and then that colony will no doubt have swelled very large, and where will the party find itself? It may have disappeared altogether by being sent up aloft. (Cries of "Down.") But anyway it is no longer a serious cry, and I would fain hope that even this session hon. gentlemen

would review the situation and give us clear, reasonable, logical criticism—criticism that, though it might come from hostile ranks, would yet add to the efficiency of that great council of the nation for the excellence and effectiveness of which my hon. friend the member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) is so much and so laudably concerned. (Cheers).



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